



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Notes and Opinions.

Luke 17:10, "We are unprofitable servants."—The interpretation of the passage Luke 17:7-10, which is in fact a parable, has given rise to no little discussion. It seems to have obtained its present position in the gospel of Luke as a result of compilation, so that one cannot feel sure that the context is a guide to its meaning. The two verses which immediately precede them deal with the question of faith. The disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith, and he replies in substance that faith is obtained by *having* it, not by receiving it from someone else; that they should *be* full of faith, rather than expect someone to make them so. The parable may stand in a logical relation to the thought here expressed, and it is indeed probable that the evangelist saw such a relation to exist in putting them into juxtaposition. It does not follow, however, that Jesus must have spoken the two sayings at the same time, and in association with one another.

It is clear that in the words, "we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do," the emphasis is not upon the term "unprofitable." This word is omitted from the verse in the Syriac palimpsest of the gospels which was recently discovered by Mrs. Lewis at the monastery on Mount Sinai. It is not to be supposed at once that the term did not therefore originally stand in this connection; but its absence from this witness gives support to the view otherwise suggested that the essential idea of the statement rests in the term "servants," as explained by the remainder of the verse.

It is obvious at once that the parable is not meant to teach an economic law as to how householders should treat their servants. Instead, Jesus has taken an illustration from actual life known to him where the existing practice of masters with their slaves was such as he has described, and out of this social condition he has drawn a figure to illumine a truth concerning the relation between God and men. Nor is it to be understood that God sustains such a relation to men as that of master to slave, so that he is an exacting, harsh, and ungrateful lord, taking all that the slaves can perform as their merest due, and giving them nothing in return but the barest existence. Such a conception of God in his dealing with men is in entire disagreement with the view of God which Jesus has given in all his other teaching.

The parable seems to be directed primarily against the pharisaic conception of men's relation to God, whereby men by their religious performances, and in proportion to the amount of those religious performances, earned recognition and favor from God. By obeying his law they merited his blessings ; or, in other words, they earned the right to the salvation which he offered them. From this point of view Jesus can only say that all that a man can be and all that a man can do simply fulfil the duty which he owes to God ; that is, that a man cannot be too good or do too much. The ideal which Jesus holds up is so high, its claims are so many, and its obligations so exacting, that no one can hope to attain it at once. And so long as one does not obtain it, one is not in an attitude to demand or to deserve blessings from God on a commercial basis, for he cannot earn salvation until he has become all, and has done all, which God's will requires of him. Therefore the disciples of Jesus are not to imagine that the relation between themselves and God is that of servants who earn their maintenance by their work, but that of persons who receive as loving gifts the blessings which come to them from God.

God would have us to be *sons* in his heavenly family, not servants. The essential difference between sons and servants in the household is that the latter are entitled only to their existence, while the former share all the generous and loving blessings which the parent can bestow. In human families, children are not supposed to earn their living, but it is given them in the fullest, freest, and most loving way possible to the parents. In return for this parental kindness a child is expected to become and to do those things which are for his best and largest development. He is not to be idle, but is to work earnestly to attain his parents' ideal for him. And, on the other hand, he is to recognize the generosity and love with which his parents provide for him. So in God's household, those who would follow Jesus must act according to the same principles. They are to recognize all that comes to them as free and loving blessings from their heavenly Father, unearned by themselves ; and further, they are to devote themselves to attaining a higher character and performing a larger service than any servant would or could do. They are to devote themselves completely to the upbuilding of the kingdom in their own lives, and in the world about them.

By this relation between men and God which Jesus seems to be teaching in this parable we learn what our proper attitude as Christians should be toward God and toward one another. We are sons in God's

great family, receiving our life and all our blessings and opportunities from him as free gifts of his love. But we do not assume that we earn these things. On the contrary, we recognize that we receive from him much more than we could possibly deserve. And also out of the love which produces in us a corresponding love and devotion we set ourselves to be and to do the best we can toward attaining God's purpose for ourselves and for others. In this passage, then, Jesus has developed the family idea as the most suitable figure to express his conception of how God deals with men, and of how men should understand him and live for the fulfilment of his purposes.

C. W. V.

The Sermon on the Mount.—In Professor B. W. Bacon's recently published address upon this discourse of Jesus he defends the general trustworthiness of the Matthæan account of the sermon: There was a real Sermon on the Mount, a discourse of Jesus to his disciples, worthy to be called the New Torah of the kingdom of God; because in it he set forth, with that clear consistency of thought and integrity of style so characteristic of the parables, the relation of morality and religion in the coming kingdom, to that of which the scribes and Pharisees were respectively the theoretical and practical exponents. But the discourse as a whole, if not positively anti-legalistic, is at least non-legalistic. The sermon must be understood as the utterance, not of a legislator, but of a *prophet*. Jesus assumed personally the authority, not indeed to enact, but to make known the absolute divine law, as it must needs be under the ideal conditions of the kingdom he proclaimed. The fundamental nature of the discourse was not legislative, but prophetic. It does not enact, but interprets. It does not lay down rules, but opens up principles.

Long indeed was it before the church could apprehend this higher point of view. Even the polemic anti-legalism of Paul could not lift the dead weight of centuries of training under the conception of "moral government." We trace the reactionary tendency in the additions of the compiler of the Sermon on the Mount, evidenced by the variant report of Luke and by inherent inconsistency with the context; in further additions of scribes of mediæval times, evidenced by the variation of manuscripts; and, finally, in the unconscious additions of modern interpreters, all in the same direction, all assuming that after all Jesus, in this case, was a casuist and not a preacher; a legislator, not a herald of the glad tidings; that he taught rules of conduct rather than principles of religion.